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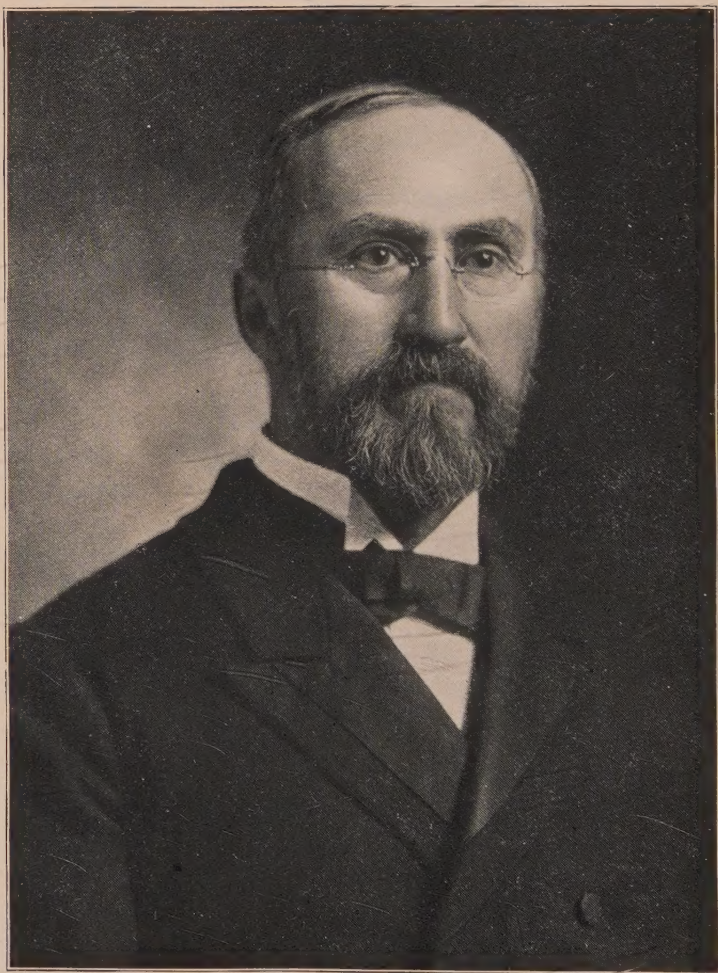
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TENDENCIES AND TASKS OF THEOLOGY TODAY.

An address delivered by Rev. Clarence A. Beckwith, D. D., at his inauguration as professor of Systematic Theology in Chicago Theological Seminary.

It seems no longer ago than yesterday that Systematic Theology, like Cæsar's word, might have stood against the world; now lies it there, and few so poor to do it reverence. Passers-by have "cast every man his stone," until what was a fair and fruitful field appears to many a barren and unsightly waste.

One may refer to a few of the causes which have led to this condition. (1) There has been a violent reaction from the results and even the methods of speculative thought. (2) The dogmatism which has ruled in systematic theology is repugnant to the spirit which prevails in other circles of thought. (3) The idea which systematic theology has sedulously cultivated—that of the finality of its conclusions—has in our day received many a rude shock. (4) Since the age is one of transition, it is felt that it would be better to wait until the ferment has worked itself out. (5) Quarrels among theologians are not to be overlooked as among the causes of the present decadence of interest in systematic theology. (6) There has been an astonishing revival of interest in Christian experience. This has borne fruit in two ways. First, religion as an experience has been distinguished from the philosophy of religion. This does not imply waning of attention to the history and science of religion as the most universal and interesting of all human facts; never was this so absorbing and intelligent as today; here an inquiry is going on which is destined to have the most profound influence in the

interpretation both of Christianity and of the ethnic faiths. In this study, however, the philosophy of the Christian religion appears for the time to have taken a secondary place, or rather, while it is the door through which scholars have entered upon the investigation of religion, it has become one aspect of a wider question—the nature of the religious consciousness in which man realizes himself in union with God. Secondly, Christian experience has thus drawn attention to itself in a most surprising degree. Edwards in his subtle and most searching analysis of the *Religious Affections*, and Bushnell in his immortal *Christian Nurture* are our great forerunners here. The rapidly growing and eagerly sought literature, dealing with the awakening of the religious consciousness in relation to adolescence and the varieties of religious experience, discloses a trend of the times. The study of Christian experience as a psychological phenomenon is, both as corrective and as stimulant, in the highest degree wholesome, and it is destined to draw to itself a far larger share of attention than it has yet received. That it has already won a place over against the wider field of dogmatic theology will be denied by no one who is alive to present conditions.

(7) Interest once centering in systematic theology is turning to other aspects of religious inquiry. I may note here several directions in which this interest is revealed. There is, for instance, study of the beginnings and development of Old Testament history and literature, and particularly in their relation to the religion and influence of neighboring peoples; an effort to ascertain the sources of the New Testament as literature; investigation of the nature of the consciousness and teaching of Jesus; the theology of the New Testament as a disclosure of the varied and developing consciousness of the leaders of the early Church; the original forms in which this consciousness

expressed itself in the communities founded by the apostles; the essence of Christianity as interpreted by the first disciples in contact with Jesus; the expansion of Christianity in the early centuries; the development of theology as it culminated in the Nicene and post-Nicene periods; the springs of the Reformation; and the new religious, social, philosophical, and scientific forces which have been moulding Christendom since the Reformation.

It is further to be added as a sign of the times that the greatest contributions to theology have lately been made by other than professed theologians. Theism has been profoundly enriched by Fiske and LeConte, comparative religion illumined by Max Müller and Jastrow, the psychology of religion has found in Starbuck, Coe, and James its chief interpreters, while the philosophy of religion owes most in our day to Edward Caird.

These are only a few of the significant channels in which the streams of theological interest are at the present time running, and one need not be surprised if the old bed in which systematic theology once flowed in a full, often swollen, and sometimes inundating current, shows at present signs of a drought, its well-worn stones long hidden from the vulgar gaze now laid bare to the listless passer-by.

There are, however, those who do not regard the situation as hopeless. On the contrary, they believe that Christian theology needs only to undergo radical changes, in order to regain its ancient and honorable position. One may roughly divide the advocates of such expectation as first, those who would substitute history for metaphysics in theology, and secondly, those who would find the meaning of Christianity not in a single fact or person, but in the idea alone.

I. If we give attention first to those who would put history in the place traditionally occupied by metaphysics,

we come upon several arguments for this transposition. (1) It is alleged that a comparison of the Galilean gospel with the so-called Athanasian creed reveals in the latter the presence of a disturbing element which was unknown to the earliest disciples and which may be separated from Christian thought without impairing its essential content. (2) It is admitted that metaphysics drawn from Greek philosophy was in the contact of Christianity with Greek cosmological speculation a necessity indeed, but at best only temporary, and that with the passing of the ancient and the arrival of the new theory of the world, theology is required to renounce alliance with metaphysics and adopt a new method. (3) Differences among Christians are felt to be those not so much of experience as of doctrine; and systematic theology, the cause of unhappy divisions in the Church, is charged with being "superfluous and obstructive." (4) On the ground of a well known theory of knowledge metaphysics is ruled out. (5) This procedure is coupled with a definite practical aim: in a return to the consciousness of the primitive Christian community will be found all the materials necessary for a life in union with God. Such a life, simple, personal, spiritual, instead of seeking for outside justification, contains within itself the sufficient ground and warrant for its own being.

With the ancient metaphysics thus ruled out, we now come to the positive proposition, which is to the effect that the chief and only hope of theology lies in the strict use of the historical method. The advocates of this proposition may be divided into three groups. According to the first, the aim of the study of dogma is to reduce Christianity to the simple terms of the primitive gospel, with the result of altogether discarding the philosophical element in theology. The second group holds that everything is to be eradicated from theology which cannot justify its presence

by an appeal to historical science. While a third theory is that since Christianity is one of the historical religions, it must be subjected to the same tests and interpreted by the same canons which are valid for other religions.

That the general aim here outlined is attractive is shown by the large and increasing number of influential thinkers both at home and abroad who are wholly or in part committed to it. For those who are naturally averse to philosophy in any form, it offers a convenient refuge. It promises a certain relief for those who are perplexed by the philosophical formulation of two great historic doctrines—the Trinity and the Person of Christ. Furthermore, it is undoubtedly true that Christianity cannot be understood apart from a comparison of it with other ethnic faiths, and without a knowledge of the background of the religious consciousness from which it sprang. Undoubtedly, too, theology may be conceived of as drawing its data exclusively from the Scriptures, and this is possible only through a rigid historical investigation into the sources of the New Testament and the precise character of the beliefs there to be discovered. Again, present day theology is a product of development of doctrine in the Church; it can therefore be appreciated only by a prolonged inquiry which shall trace the various stages in the evolution of Christian doctrine and their relation to the unfolding consciousness of the Church as reflected in its institutions, customs, and changing beliefs. It is, moreover, to be declared that great and solid gains have come and are yet to come from the use of the historical method in theology. Indeed it might almost be said that the chief difference between ancient and modern Christian thought is marked by the introduction of this method. Nowhere else is this so evident as with reference to Jesus Christ. Lately as never before attention has been directed to the earthly Jesus, to the circumstances of His

life, to His consciousness, and to His deeds. One result of this has been to shift the primary emphasis concerning Him from doctrine to facts which could be ascertained and substantiated by scientific methods of inquiry. Another result, still more significant, has been that this wonderful person has been presented with a reality and life-likeness of portraiture hitherto impossible since the synoptic gospels were written. Still another result has been that, on the one hand, myth and legend can no more be appealed to as containing the secret of Jesus' life, and, on the other hand, the interpretation of His person proceeds not from the dogmatic, but from the biographic historical point of view. In the light of such considerations as these, I believe that it would be difficult to exaggerate the value of that which we may rightly hope for from this quarter.

If, however, the meaning of this program is that Christianity, while admittedly one of the ethnic faiths, even though marked by its own distinctive excellence, yet is to be classed as merely a further differentiation on Jewish soil of the religious impulse common to man, or if it is regarded as susceptible of exhaustive interpretation by the historical method alone, then one's assent to it must be qualified. There is in Christianity a creative principle, especially in the person of Christ, which, since it is not the product of history alone, does not yield up its secret to a purely historical analysis. And this cannot be left as a simple fact of experience without attempt at further, even metaphysical, inquiry. Not only so, but that which constitutes the principle and power of the highest human experience as here disclosed must be consciously related to the rest of life and organized into the unity of our rational thinking. To bring this to pass the aid of metaphysics is not to be declined, and that too for several reasons.

(1) The place which metaphysics holds in the thought

of men. From all the great universities books are still pouring forth which deal in an exhaustive manner with the ultimate questions of reality. From the subjective point of view is the theory of knowledge, from the objective side is the discussion of time, space, cause, substance, and the ultimate grounds of consciousness. Periodicals like the *American Journal of Theology* and the *Hibbert Journal* present these subjects unabashed and unrebuked. A particular form of speculative philosophy may prove untenable, but the eager mind of man will never permit a barrier to be raised beyond which thinking shall not go, nor deem that the search for truth is only the idle chasing of a will-o'-the-wisp. The greatest thinkers from Plato down have believed that the inner nature of reality would yield up its secret to the insight of man, and each has died passing his torch on to those who came after him.

(2) There is a widespread application of metaphysics to the fundamental problems of the religious life. The nature of the religious consciousness, the conception of God, the universe as a revelation of God and the seat and home of moral ends, the meaning of the human in relation to the divine personality, the enigma of suffering, the ethical outcome of the struggle for existence,—these are questions which men are everywhere asking. No one would indeed affirm that a final answer to any of these had yet been reached, but he would as decisively hold that some ground, at least, has been won as a result of this prolonged search. Measured by mediæval notions, and still more as compared with the Greek philosophy in the flowering time of its genius, worthy and permanent gains have been registered. And the end is not yet.

(3) There is an insatiate demand in human intelligence for unity amidst all its ideas. There may be those who try to be content when each individual aspect of their

knowledge is put in separate packages, hermetically sealed, properly labeled, and kept absolutely apart from every other aspect of their knowledge—the scientific, the religious, the esthetic, the historical, the social. The normal consciousness, however, is not and cannot be satisfied with any such fragmentary knowledges. It is the very nature of human intelligence to unify all its acquisitions in some principle by which these may be interpreted and harmonized. It will never stop short of thinking the world through and thinking it together.

(4) If, then, this is the relation of metaphysics to all other human thought, why should it be excluded from the highest subject of interest—the religious? And this question is more significant when one remembers that there are no problems in theology which have not first emerged in philosophy. There are, indeed, those who would remove all these questions from theology as such, and consider them from a purely philosophical point of view, thus dividing them up among several subjects, such as the philosophy of theism, the rational theory of the world, and the ultimate conception of man as individual and social. Nor would one be apathetic to such a suggestion. Possibly this tendency, so strong at present, points the way we are going. If so, then relatively less attention will hereafter be given to systematic theology as a connected and unified discipline, and the elements which have been associated in it will be separated and treated as individual subjects of inquiry. In this event, some subjects which have been included in dogmatics will be remanded back to biblical or historical theology, others passed over to more directly philosophical consideration, while still others will receive an individual attention which has hitherto been impossible. But whatever the division, the result will mean not less but more metaphysics.

II. The other tendency referred to may be described

as the disposition to find the meaning of Christianity not in any event or deed or person however remarkable, but in the idea alone. It is not difficult to trace this conception in modern thought. Lessing, for instance, said that accidental facts of history could never become proof of external spiritual truth. And Kant held that since no fact could ever completely embody an idea, the idea alone was of supreme importance. There may, indeed, be profound interest lent to the inquiry as to the particular personal consciousness in which the Christian idea first arose and also concerning him who "first made it shine into our souls;" but the historical inquiry ended, the question of chief import remains, namely, concerning the idea.

This tendency gets its impulse from several principles. (1) Every religious idea contains an inner necessity of limitless development. (2) Only then can the true nature of the idea be completely disclosed when its evolution has proceeded to its utmost possibility. (3) Since the idea has never yet been perfectly present in the human consciousness, a perfect expression of it will be vainly sought in any human deed. (4) Christianity is the supreme instance of the religious idea developing itself with teleological instinct toward its divine goal. (5) The significance of Jesus lies in the fact that in Him the religious principle appeared in a form purer, more energetic and quickening than is found elsewhere among men. (6) The task of Christian theology is thus clearly indicated - to discover the essential principle which is revealed in the religious consciousness, especially in Christ, to set this free from foreign admixtures, and to unfold its meaning in relation to God, to the world, and to the life of man both here and hereafter.

The tendency thus barely sketched is just now of great strength. And there is profound truth in it. For first, Christianity is, like other religions, a historical religion. It

comprises also a principle of development which is capable of infinite expansion, never to be arrested short of the perfection of man and the race. Only when the development is complete will all that this principle involves become fully intelligible. And finally, the religious principle developing in Christianity contains no dark, incomprehensible remainder, — it is through and through rational; in it are, indeed, unfathomable depths, mysteries which transcend present experience; but it is an expression of the divine Logos, and it proceeds through orderly stages to its goal.

So far as these positions attempt to maintain, purely in terms of the reason, what is characteristic of the religious principle and its development, one finds himself in hearty agreement with them. When, however, these are claimed to be all-inclusive, when, that is, it is alleged that this is all that there is to Christianity, then one is compelled to demur. For Christianity is not merely truth,—it is life; the truth is the life. That which makes Christianity absolute is the truth in terms of life. It is addressed to the will, not as that which is completely comprehended at the outset, but as the ideal whose meaning is to be unfolded through self-surrender and obedience. By an inner compulsion it lays hold of the sinful heart, binds the conscience with a compelling conviction of sin, and creates within the sinner a longing for deliverance from the bondage of his evil will. And no sooner has it forced from him the cry of guilt and of utter self-distrust, than it wakens within him the assurance that he has in Jesus Christ forgiveness, consciousness of freedom, and thus eternal victory. From death to life, from sin to pardon, from despair to hope,—this is the experience of countless souls in contact with Jesus Christ. Once He was to them scarcely more than a historical person; now He has become the Son of God, Saviour, Lord. Between Him and them is a relation unique, shared by no other, never to be

transcended, and never to cease, only to be interpreted through life and love.

Accordingly, theology may deal with the finality of the Christian religion from the point of view of the religious idea, and it may consider Jesus Christ in His relation to history, to the religious principle in man, and to the founders of ethnic faiths, but it misses its aim if it fails to interpret Christianity in personal values, or to see in Jesus Christ the source and living power of Christian experience, the meeting-point of God and man, the Revealer of God, the Redeemer of man. And however rich the future development of the Christian life, of which theology will hereafter have to take account,—this will no doubt be infinitely richer than we at present dream,—still the type of it will remain unchanged, the perfect and final type of personality, of which the living Christ is the beginning and end, and love the first and the last spirit in it.

III. As to the immediate future of systematic theology as a discipline, one would scarce venture upon a forecast. I have convictions, however, which I think it worth while to utter here. As an individual subject it commands less consideration than it did only a few years ago. In our leading seminaries the course in "The Outline of Christian Theology" occupies only about three-fifths of the time formerly allotted to it. And it is not at all unlikely that in any seminary where the curriculum is sufficiently rich it may in the near future be placed among the electives.

If systematic theology is to mean more in the future than in the present, this will show itself in two ways. (1) From the point of view of comparative theology. By this I mean a comparison of the various theologies of Christendom rather than a comparison of the religious thought of the ethnic faiths. Hitherto, theology has been dogmatic; it has been the system of one man; it has stood for a school

of thought; it has considered other theological systems mainly for the sake of exposing and refuting their errors; it has been more or less unsympathetic, exclusive, polemic. But comparative theology, like comparative religion, will without prejudice seek first of all for the organic principles from which have sprung the various forms of modern religious thought, and then having found the genetic ideas will further seek that deeper principle in Christian experience, in the doctrine of God, the world, and man, in which the differences will be as far as possible resolved as partial aspects of the variously developing consciousness of man. Still, as of old, God speaks to men "by divers portions and in divers manners;" and just as there is a biblical theology of St. Paul and St. John, and a common principle out of which these have both sprung, so there is a comparative theology of the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, the Calvinistic, and the Arminian churches, and the more modern developments of Christian thought; and if at first the differences make on one the impression of hopeless discord, yet a further study will only disclose the common ground out of which they have all arisen. Instead of theology remaining, therefore, purely sectarian and narrow, it will perforce take on a spirit of comprehensiveness. And this of itself would be a sufficient reason for teaching it from a comparative rather than from a dogmatic point of view.

Moreover, the student is going out into a world not of dead issues, but of living and palpitating ideas. He is to be set down in the midst of churches which not only have a great past, but an even richer present, determined by distinctive intellectual no less than by particular spiritual genius. In all these churches are men of intense and forceful convictions through whom the denominational consciousness is helping to organize the religious life of the world. The young pastor will find among his chief intel-

lectual needs few more imperative than to know the theoretical backgrounds on which the great churches are doing their work. When the courses in biblical interpretation and historical theology are completed the student is ripe for becoming acquainted with the principal forms in which Christian thought is today conceiving of the realities of the common faith. Intelligence and sympathy will then take the place of ignorance and suspicion, co-operation will be substituted for isolation, and insight and judgment and poise will be immeasurably enhanced. If in the apostolic days to prove all things was a condition of holding fast the good, much more necessary is the same duty now. It may indeed be objected that the student being immature needs at this stage of his training a more authoritative direction, but if he is mature enough to study theology at all, he must be capable of forming judgments, and the forming of judgments, while one of the most difficult, is at the same time one of the most necessary acts of intelligence. It is, moreover, one of the perils of the scholar. His safety lies not in the avoidance but in the practice of it. And woe be to the teacher who fails to give the pupil adequate material as well as provocation for this most needful art.

(2) The outline course in theology may become relatively less important than formerly, yet, on the other hand, the task of the Christian theologian is growing broader, more interesting, and more valuable with each passing year. As evidence of this, consider three directions in which work which belongs to this department is asserting its claim. First, as introductory, we have the Philosophy of Religion. Here one seeks for a solution of the ultimate relations between God and the world and man, as these are disclosed in the religious consciousness. Secondly, there is Apologetics, with its discussion of religious problems which have emerged in science and philosophy and have made a

rational, coherent interpretation of the world difficult. Thirdly, large space is given to special subjects which are indeed comprised in the general outline of theology, but which, on account of their special importance, demand increased attention. Among such subjects are theories of the person of Christ, with particular reference to present Christian belief; the Christian doctrine of salvation as seen in the historical theories of the atonement and in the light of modern ethical ideas of personality and personal action; the psychology of religious experience in its bearing on conversion, Christian nurture, and the development of the new life, with an interpretation of the varieties and aberrations of its manifestation; and contemporary religious thought as found in the great schools and leaders of Christendom.

Several things are thus evident. One is that systematic theology, with from ninety to a hundred hours in the curriculum, occupies a relatively much smaller place than formerly. Again, on the other hand, subjects which used to belong to the course in systematic theology receive a much more thorough handling in the separate studies of the philosophy of religion, apologetics, and particular questions in theology proper than was ever possible in a merely outline course. Furthermore, it is to be expected that these courses which have gradually made a place for themselves will command a keener and more intelligent interest on the part of the student than does that which he will give to the outline course. Once more, it may be questioned whether Christian theology would not be more adequately taught either by a comparative study in which the various modern schools of thought are subjected to exposition and criticism, or by devoting attention to a restricted and thus more thorough investigation of certain rational and experimental aspects of the religious life. In any case, systematic theology has

been and is undergoing a serious transformation in the method of teaching it, which behooves those who have it in charge to see that it is in the highest degree sensitive and responsive to the scientific and religious demands of our modern world.

IV. If theology is measurably to fulfill its ideal task, it must meet certain definite demands, some of which I can scarcely more than mention. (1) It must rightly conceive the nature and place of authority. In an unsettled, ignorant, and uncritical age when learning was confined to the gifted few it is not doubted that a necessary stage in the development of knowledge of the truth was that of an external authority. Its office was in part to check wayward and foolish incursions into an unreal world, but mostly to be as a finger-post, arresting attention, pointing the way, awakening the spirit of inquiry and putting the traveler on his guard, thus enabling him to avail himself of all his resources as to the right path. No Christian truth can, however, be permanently committed to the guardianship of authority from without. Belief in the deepest sense is impossible so long as such a condition prevails. The ultimate seat of authority is within, in the moral consciousness, as it wakens and answers to the compelling influence of the Spirit of God. In concrete cases the exact definition of this principle may be difficult to state, the outline may appear shadowy and unsatisfactory, but nowhere else can one find safe refuge. This does not, however, imply arrogance. It contains no warrant for fanaticism. It does not involve breaking with the past deep life of the church. This would be not only distrust of the permanent supreme leadership of the Spirit of God among men, but also and still more denial of the conviction that one now is or can be in possession of the truth. The final authority is where Calvin found it—in the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*.

(2) Theology is to be interpreted in the light of its history. Every great doctrine has had a past peculiar to itself. It cannot be even understood except as seen in its development. It is indeed a serious question whether the most effective way of presenting theology is not by means of the history of doctrine. In any case, he who has been thoroughly grounded in that history and in the philosophy out of which it arose understands as does no one else the meaning of every doctrine of the Church today.

(3) Theology has a peculiar task in relation to psychology and ethics. For it is dealing with consciousness and personality, with not only the actual condition but the ideal aim of the individual and society, and with the character and will of God. In the psychological sphere two laws may be alleged: first, nothing may be admitted into theology concerning man which is repugnant to the known conditions of the human consciousness; secondly, if God is the Ideal Consciousness, then in the consciousness of man must be found the materials for determining the nature of God. Even the consciousness of Christ, so far as this is susceptible of description and analysis, falls within the same requirement. From the field of ethics also theology draws data of priceless worth. It is to the advancing ethical ideal that theology owes perhaps more than to any other source. This advancing ethical ideal has brought about changes in the idea of the character of God, of His dealings with men, of the person and work of Christ, of the meaning and ministry of the church, and, not least of all, of the future of humanity in this or in any world.

(4) Evolution is to be accepted as a working hypothesis. Theologians cannot decline the law which rules in every other department of human intelligence. In our theistic, teleological view of the world we must hold fast to

"One God, one law, one element,
And one far off, divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

(5) Theology must give itself to fresh study and appreciation of the Scriptures. On the one hand, it cannot go blindly on as if nothing had happened in the field of biblical history and criticism; on the other hand, it must not be afraid. Results of Old and New Testament Introduction must be candidly accepted. The newer canons of exegesis which conduct to a truer interpretation of the sacred writers must be heartily adopted. Nor must the theologian be indifferent to the contemporary ideas which prevailed in biblical times, which often profoundly influenced the apostolic consciousness.

(6) In one region more than anywhere else the theologian needs to be sensitive, discriminating, frank, and tireless—the consciousness of Jesus Christ. No traditional prepossessions should deter him from ascertaining as far as possible the form and limitations of that consciousness or from incorporating the results of his study into the very structure of his thought. Theology has nothing to lose but everything to gain by going to school to Jesus Christ.

(7) Finally, not the least of all present-day needs is that theology, if it is to be fresh, living, palpitating with reality, shall be the immediate and untrammelled interpretation of the Christian experience of today. The theologian must himself be a Christian man. For him as for the apostle Paul the most interesting and significant fact of his life will be that God has revealed His Son in him. And in this fact, mysterious indeed, yet luminous with redemptive meaning, will be found the center and the circumference of all his thought. Thus conceiving of his task, the theologian, weighted with immeasurable responsibility toward his seminary and his pupils, toward the ideal future, toward his own conscience, will go forward in profound trust and obedience of the Holy Spirit of God.

SEMINARY NOTES.

A good beginning has been made in the effort to raise \$150,000 for the endowment of the German and Scandinavian Institutes of the Seminary. Before the summer vacation over \$10,000 was pledged.

The course of study for the Christian Institute has been revised and enlarged under the direction of Prof. F. W. Ellis; and Miss F. A. Fensham, for years teacher of Bible in the American School for Girls in Constantinople, a graduate of the Seminary in the class of 1902, will assist in the instruction.

Prof. Beckwith's book, "Reality of Christian Theology" (now in press), should enlist the interest and careful study of every reader of the QUARTERLY, for in our generation few American divines, Congregationalists perhaps least of all, have published works on this subject. Undue attention has been given to critical studies of the Scriptures, and the field of historical and practical theology. Dogmatic theology has been left too much to "Christian Science," Dowieism, Agnostic writers and Roman Catholics. We trust Dr. Beckwith's book will mark a return to a proper estimate among us of systematic theology as the proper relation of all truth gathered from natural, ethnic, Biblical and historical theology and its living outlook upon all parts of practical theology. The price of the work is \$2.00.

The publishers, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., say of it:

"Taking the Christian consciousness as a basis, Prof. Beckwith has built up a scientific treatise on theology, which is concise in statement, clear in thought and argument, and attractive in style. He is influenced by the modern historical spirit, and follows the scientific method of study, but

gives due place to metaphysics and psychology. The result is an admirable restatement of Christian theology in terms of modern thought. While the author is decidedly evangelical in his point of view, he is frank in his abandonment of some of the traditional principles of Biblical interpretation, and in his acceptance of the really established results of present-day scholarship.

"In this spirit he discusses in a stimulating way such subjects as creation, evolution, and death; the freedom of the will and the relation of choice to character; the cause, origin, and consequences of sin; the person of Jesus Christ; the identification of Christ with men and of men with Christ; the future life; and finally, the doctrine of the Trinity.

"The book appeals not only to all students of theology, but equally to that large class of thoughtful general readers who would be repelled from an old-time treatise on dogmatics, but who recognize the vital interest of a competent statement of these great subjects in the light of today. Prof. Beckwith was formerly a Congregational minister in Boston, then for several years professor of Christian Theology in Bangor Seminary, and in 1905 was called to the chair of Systematic Theology in Chicago Theological Seminary."

It is not a treatise on Systematic Theology in the traditional sense of the term, not anywhere near as much as Clarke's little work; but the subject is so presented that the literary interest does not lag. It is little wonder that people are tired of theological treatises from the text-book point of view. This work is of quite a different character.

The table of contents is as follows: 1, Introduction, Touchstones of Present Day Theology; 2, The Doctrine of God; 3, The Christian View of the World; 4, Man; 5, Sin; 6, Identification of Christ with Men: I. The Person of Christ; II. The Work of Christ; 7, Identification of Men

with Christ: I. The Beginning; II. The Development; 8, The Future; 9, The Trinity.

That our readers may have a clear idea of Dr. Beckwith's point of view, we publish from advanced sheets the preface to his book. It is as follows:

"Theological discussion is confronted by manifold difficulties. One person comes to it for metaphysics, another for history or tradition, a third for the working over of the Scriptures, while still another is satisfied only when he finds his own views exactly reproduced. On the one hand, we are advised that the time is ripe for a reconstruction of theology and are treated to fruitful suggestions along this line; on the other hand, we are warned that a reconstruction of theology is hopeless, since, without an accepted cosmology or metaphysics, it provides no material for the system builder. On one subject, however, there is universal agreement; whatever the differences of past or present explanations of Christian belief, the Christian experience of today is essentially the same that it has been from the beginning. It cannot, therefore, be wholly in vain to attempt a fresh interpretation of Christian experience in terms of modern intelligence.

"With this conviction, the present work has been undertaken. The Scriptures have been used, so far as they present the highest type of Christian experience and provide material for its realization. The great confessions and the chief theologians of the church have been consulted with a constructive—but never with a controversial—aim. Unqualified reliance has been placed upon psychology as revealing the laws of consciousness, upon ethics as disclosing the ideal to be realized in personality, and upon evolution as the constant method of the divine action in nature and *human historical life*. Nor has the aid of metaphysics been declined wherever it has promised assistance. The

purpose has been to consider the realities of Christian faith so far as these are made known in and through Christian experience. Accordingly many subjects commonly included in treatises on theology are here omitted, on account of their remoteness or irrelevancy to the end in view. The result is neither a compendium nor text book of theology, but rather a presentation of the contents of faith as limited and at the same time illumined by Christian experience.

"Modesty, reserve, understatement are perhaps the moral qualities most needed in such a task. If the insight is not clear, the judgment sane, the sympathy true, the spirit Christian, this will be regretted by no one more than by myself. On every subject I have written with unrestrained candor. I have not hidden from myself, nor would I conceal from my readers, the conflict between the scientific and the religious interests connected with faith. I believe, however, that a reconciliation of these interests, although postponed, is not to be despaired of, and that when it comes to pass, it will be effected, not by suppression of one at the expense of the other, but by discovery of the principle in which both interests shall be regarded not as antagonistic, but as completing aspects of man's relation to reality. Meanwhile, to each interest—the religious and the scientific—must be accorded the worth which belongs to it in its own right. In addition, one may be well content not to have spoken the last word, but to hand on many an unsolved problem to others, that they may also share the pleasure which he has felt in pursuing questions through their inviting mazes until they disclosed a part at least of their secret to his patient search.

"The traditional order of topics is mainly followed, partly for convenience, and partly because to one who travels through a country it is of less importance by what route he goes than what he sees on the way and what he

brings back with him for further study in reflective hours. The subjects which are usually discussed under the person of Christ and the Atonement, and under Regeneration, Conversion, and Sanctification, are treated here under two reciprocal titles, the Identification of Christ with Men, and the Identification of Men with Christ. Thus a point of view is indicated for the consideration of the divine and the human aspects of Christian experience. The consideration of the Trinity has been reserved for the last, in order to take the doctrine out of the field of dogma and to let it be seen to be—what it is—the final explanation of the contents of faith. Thus God is the beginning and the end of our thought.

Prof. Hermann Obenhaus of the German Institute has spent the summer in taking special studies in Germany at the University of Berlin.

It is expected that the lectures to be delivered by Secretary Barton of the American Board on the Alden Lectureship will be given in November. The subject is: Missions in the Turkish Empire.

Rev. W. H. Day, of the class of 1892, has been granted the degree of D. D. by his *Alma Mater*, Amherst College.

The following churches have taken offerings for the Seminary during the year 1906: in Chicago, the First, Union Park, Warren Ave., Park Manor, Lincoln Park, Pilgrim, New England, South, Bethel, Plymouth, North Shore, Leavitt St., Covenant; other Illinois churches contributing were the First, Second and Third, Oak Park, LaGrange, Buda, Geneva, First Church Moline, Wilmette, Rollo, Edelstein, Second Church Rockford, Stillman Valley, First

Church Peoria, Evanston, Byron, Winnetka; in Wisconsin, the Grand Ave. and Plymouth Milwaukee, First Burlington, LaCrosse, Lake Geneva, First Fort Atkinson; in Minnesota, Union Church Elk River, First Mankato, Fairbault, First Lake City. It is possible this list may not be complete; but there seem to be no contributions from churches outside Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota, though individual gifts have been received, *e. g.*, one of \$1,000 from Michigan and a similar donation from Missouri. Among German churches sending contributions are St. James, Chicago; Christ Church, Wellington, Colo.; Immanuel, Fort Collins, Colo., and Israel's Church, Java, S. Dak. The Swedish churches contributing during the year ending August 31, 1906, were: DeKalb, Ill., Brattleboro, Vt., Joliet, Ill., Georgetown, Conn., Swedish Bethlehem, Chicago, Lowell, Mass., Bridgeport, Conn., Morristown, N. J., South Manchester, Conn., Montclair, N. J., East Douglas and Millville, Mass., Ashtabula, O., Quincy, Mass., Pawtucket, R. I., Hegewisch, Chicago, Clear Lake, Wis., Waverly, Neb., Thomaston, Conn., Deep River, Conn., Hartford, Conn., Michigan City, Ind., Hinsdale, Ill., Plainville, Conn., Orange, Mass., Missoula, Mont., East Greenwich, R. I., Naugatuck, Conn., Upsala, Minn., Proctor, Vt., Center Rutland, Vt., Woodstock, Conn., Pittsburg, Pa., Ivoryton, Conn., East Norwalk, Conn., Worcester, Mass., Fitchburg, Mass., Flesburg, Minn., Lincoln, Neb., Brooklyn, N. Y., Aberdeen, Wash., Collinsville, Conn., Orange, Mass.

Our Norwegian churches have done equally well, but in the absence of the professors visiting them the data are not available.

At the general conference of our German churches held in Loveland, Colo., July 18-22, an association of our German alumni was formed.

Prof. Kraft attended the conference, was made chair-

man of the Committee on Resolutions, and elected secretary of the German Congregational Publishing Society. This society publishes the weeklies *Der Kirchenbote* and *Die Segensquelle*, and other literature for our German churches. Prof. Obenhaus has been made business manager of the society.

Of the five students entering the Swedish Institute this fall, one each comes from Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Minnesota.

TO OUR ALUMNI.—The educational work of the Seminary, its high character, spirit and hopefulness never were more active than now; but there is great need of your sympathy and aid to carry on this many-sided work. It costs, out of the money given us by the churches, \$1,000 to educate a man. Every one of you is a debtor to the Seminary to that amount, not to speak of all the other gifts in a theological course. The interest on that investment in each alumnus is \$50 a year. May we not urge (1), that every graduate aim at securing an average offering of, say half that amount annually to the Seminary; and (2) that special efforts be made to contribute toward the \$150,000 endowment being raised for our foreign institutes? Are there not some men of means in your churches to whom you could tell of the work of the Seminary and its need of more money to carry on the same? Will you not set apart one service in the year to speak on Christian Education and take an offering for it?

